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Review on the influence of student engagement and interaction in online learning communities on academic achievement

S.M. Levin✉*Tomsk State University of Control Systems and Radioelectronics, Tomsk, Russian Federation*✉semen.m.levin@tusur.ru

Abstract. This paper explores the effect of students' involvement in online educational communities on their learning outcomes from 2010 to 2022. It investigates the role of active participation in digital forums, social media, and online platforms in boosting students' motivation, enhancing their grasp of educational content, and cultivating essential skills for effective learning. The study utilizes qualitative and quantitative research methods, such as interviews, surveys, and examining educational achievements. It reveals that students engaging actively in online communities demonstrate superior academic results to their less-engaged counterparts. Additionally, the research highlights challenges in upholding academic integrity and crafting viable strategies for self-management in digital settings. These insights offer valuable contributions to developing educational practices and adopting tech-based solutions to elevate student engagement and academic performance in today's digital age. A key finding is emphasizing the creation of an encouraging and dynamic online educational environment that promotes active participation and collaboration.

Keywords: online educational communities, learning outcomes, digital forums, student engagement, academic integrity, self-management, digital age, educational practices, tech-based solutions

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Влияние вовлеченности и взаимодействия студентов в онлайн-учебных сообществах на академические достижения: обзор

С.М. Левин✉*Томский государственный университет систем управления и радиоэлектроники,
Томск, Россия*✉semen.m.levin@tusur.ru

Аннотация. Статья посвящена анализу влияния участия студентов в виртуальных образовательных сообществах на их академическую успеваемость. В исследовании, охватывающем период с 2010 по 2022 гг., изучено, как активное взаимодействие в онлайн-платформах, форумах и социальных сетях способствует повышению мотивации студентов, улучшению понимания учебного материала и развитию ключевых

навыков, необходимых для успешного обучения. Применялись методы качественного и количественного анализа, включая анкетирование, интервью и анализ академических результатов. Основной вывод исследования заключается в том, что студенты, активно участвующие в виртуальных сообществах, демонстрируют лучшие академические результаты по сравнению с менее активными участниками. Также были выявлены вызовы и препятствия, связанные с поддержанием академической честности и развитием эффективных стратегий самоорганизации в онлайн-среде. Результаты исследования могут быть полезны для разработки методик обучения и внедрения технологических решений, направленных на повышение вовлеченности и успеваемости студентов в цифровую эпоху. Подчеркивается важность создания поддерживающей и стимулирующей образовательной среды, способствующей активному взаимодействию и сотрудничеству в виртуальных образовательных сообществах.

Ключевые слова: виртуальные образовательные сообщества, академическая успеваемость, онлайн-платформы, мотивация студентов, академическая честность, самоорганизация, цифровая эпоха, методы обучения, технологические решения

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Introduction

In the past decade, the digital revolution has profoundly influenced various facets of life, including education. This transformation is notably evident in the rise of online communities, which have become integral to students' educational journeys. These digital spaces are vital platforms for exchanging ideas, acquiring knowledge, and collaborating on projects, significantly affecting student achievement. Online communities cover various interactions, from blogs and forums to social networks and dedicated educational platforms. These mediums facilitate relations among students, enabling them to share academic insights, engage in meaningful discussions, collaborate on projects, and seek guidance from educators and experts worldwide.

Furthermore, these platforms provide essential opportunities for honing critical thinking and information management skills. Students become adept at navigating through abundant data and identifying trustworthy information amidst a sea of content, indispensable in the current era of information saturation. Nonetheless, online communities encounter various hurdles. A primary concern is the overwhelming presence of information, necessitating students to critically evaluate and filter content to focus on what is genuinely pertinent to their academic and research pursuits [1]. Challenges concerning academic integrity also arise. The ease of sharing exam solutions or completed assignments within these communities can dilute the educational process value and cast doubts on the authenticity of students' knowledge. The social-psychological dimension warrants attention as well. While online communities offer vast socialization avenues, they risk fostering social isolation if digital interactions begin to overshadow face-to-face engagements. Additionally, the technical aspect cannot be overlooked. The disparity in students' access to and proficiency with modern technologies and the Internet can hinder effective participation in online communities [2]. Despite these obstacles, online communities remain invaluable in the educational landscape. They are pivotal for knowledge sharing, skill enhancement, and professional development. Addressing the challenges these communities face demands a concerted effort from all stakeholders in the educational ecosystem: developers, educational institutions, educators, and students alike.

Instituting robust ethical guidelines, creating solutions to reduce information overload, and promoting digital literacy among educators and students could significantly ameliorate these issues, rendering online communities more conducive to education. Online communities are redefining interaction, knowledge sharing, and collective endeavour paradigms in the digital age. These digital forums, from message boards and chat rooms to social media and collaborative platforms, constitute

more than simple congregations of individuals with common interests. They are vibrant venues where users can interact, exchange knowledge, and collaborate across distances [3].

A hallmark of online communities is their interactive nature, offering a venue for dialogue and cooperative endeavours. Their availability at any time from anywhere in the world with an internet connection makes them exceptionally convenient for international communication and collaboration. Many offer a degree of anonymity, which can facilitate a more open exchange of ideas and opinions, though this also brings academic honesty and personal safety challenges.

Virtual communities serve many functions, from educational to social, professional, and cultural. They can be a crucial resource for learning, offering access to academic materials, online courses, and webinars. The relationships nurtured within these digital environments are instrumental in preserving current connections and forging new ones, whereas the professional exchanges occurring on these platforms enable a rich flow of knowledge and expertise among specialists across different domains [4]. Platforms like GitHub for coders and the extensive array of "subreddits" on Reddit exemplify the variety and influence of such online congregations. GitHub promotes cooperation on projects and the sharing of coding resources, whereas Reddit serves as a hub for dialogue on an endless spectrum of subjects.

Student virtual communities

Within digital engagement, learners encounter diverse avenues for interaction that profoundly reshape their educational and communal lives. Digital forums provide an arena for joint efforts on academic ventures, facilitating a dynamic exchange of knowledge and deep dive into subjects, thereby knitting participants closer together. These online communities thrive on a culture of reciprocal support, with students eagerly extending help and sharing insights, fostering a sense of solidarity and cooperative spirit. Discussions in these spaces invigorate the learning journey, offering a platform for students to voice their opinions, explore different perspectives, and thoughtfully evaluate their peers' proposals. This enhancement not only complicates but also enriches the educational experience.

Moreover, learners actively produce educational and inventive content, leveraging digital tools for study, personal expression, and peer engagement in unprecedented ways [5]. Additionally, online mentorship and tutoring unveil fresh opportunities for exchanging knowledge and life lessons between seasoned students, alums, and their less experienced counterparts. Such efforts contribute to personal and professional development, strengthening bonds between different generations of students and creating a supportive mentorship network.

The intrinsic competitiveness within online spaces is pivotal in propelling students toward success and continuous self-improvement. Digital environments unveil myriad opportunities for showcasing academic achievements, creating a culture of healthy competition and collective inspiration [6]. The complex web of interactions that unfold in the digital landscape forms a diverse and intricate network of student relationships. This network supports academic and personal development, instilling in students an appreciation for diverse viewpoints, teamwork proficiency, and digital communication skills. Consequently, digital spaces transcend mere study venues, evolving into platforms for interpersonal connection, professional advancement, and inventive self-expression, highlighting the significance of contemporary technologies in education [7]. Groups on social networks dedicated to exam prep in specific subjects exemplify the benefits of collaborative topic discussions, question-and-answer exchanges, and mnemonic strategies for enhancing subject comprehension and academic performance. Participants in such groups often report gaining more insights and practical tips than through conventional classroom learning.

Quizlet, for instance, enables students to craft or use pre-made flashcard sets for study. Regular competitions and interactions boost academic engagement and improve content retention. Adding gaming elements and instant feedback amplifies the learning experience [8]. Platforms like Edmodo

or Google Classroom allow teacher-student interactions within a course framework, facilitating material exchanges, assignments, and critiques. This collaborative setting solidifies content understanding and fosters teamwork and communication capabilities [9]. Virtual student communities are diverse, with unique features and objectives to support learners. For example, educational forums allow students to pose and answer academic queries. Platforms like Stack Exchange provide specialized sections for subjects like mathematics, science, and programming, aiding in exploring and resolving intricate issues.

LinkedIn Learning and similar social networks offer courses and resources for those seeking educational and professional growth. These platforms promote learning while enabling networking and helping students establish professional contacts. Collaboration tools such as Google Docs and Trello are essential in streamlining teamwork for projects and assignments and improving coordination, planning, and information sharing [10]. Online mentorship platforms like MentorCruise connect students with experienced professionals or alums, offering personalized counsel, guidance, and support. This mentorship enriches the educational journey with priceless insights and inspiration. In the competitive sphere, platforms like Kaggle engage students in data analysis and programming contests, fostering technical skills and motivation through real-world challenges from leading corporations.

Virtual student communities can be categorized based on their functionality and goals into:

- academic forums and discussion platforms for scholarly dialogue, knowledge dissemination, and academic issue resolution;
- social and professional networks focused on career advancement, networking, and skill development through various courses;
- collaborative platforms and tools designed to simplify teamwork on projects and assignments, offering file-sharing, project management, and communication solutions;
- mentorship platforms that link students with mentors for tailored advice and support in professional development;
- competitive and gamified environments that challenge students through contests and projects, promoting skill assessment and enhancement;
- educational platforms and MOOCs provide broad access to courses and lectures from leading global universities and colleges.

These virtual community types offer a holistic framework for student support, covering academic assistance, professional development, collaborative work, mentorship, and competitive learning, all facilitated by the broad reach of modern technology.

Relationships among students in the online space

Effective communication and collaboration are pivotal for academic achievement, impacting learning and student development more profoundly than initially apparent. Engaging in group projects and active discussion participation enhances subject understanding, fosters critical thinking, and improves information analysis and synthesis skills [11]. This foundational work allows for more profound knowledge comprehension, enabling students to apply information practically, recognize interconnections between concepts, and think creatively. Through collaboration, students learn to value diverse perspectives and approaches to problem-solving. They encounter different viewpoints that challenge their assumptions and expand their worldviews. Such exchanges cultivate listening and expression skills, crucial in academic and professional realms [12]. Collaboration also enhances problem-solving abilities. Working in teams teaches students to deconstruct larger tasks into manageable segments, allocate responsibilities, and collaborate towards a shared objective. This process teaches planning and organizational skills, encourages adaptable thinking, and prepares students for variable circumstances. Social skill development is an essential component of academic success tied to communication and collaboration. Interactions with educators and peers

make students feel integral to the educational community, boost their learning motivation [13], and strengthen their academic belonging. This sense of community can significantly alleviate study-related stress and anxiety, fostering a more conducive learning environment. Feedback role in learning is crucial. Collaborative projects and discussions enable the exchange of feedback, which is vital for refining study techniques and personal development. Students learn to critically evaluate their and their peers' work, benefiting from successes and mistakes, thus deepening knowledge and enhancing academic performance [14].

In the digital environment, student relationships manifest in various forms, offering unique academic and personal growth opportunities. Examples of interaction types include following:

- a) Collaborative learning: groups come together to delve into new subjects or prepare for exams via Zoom or Google Meet, sharing knowledge, discussing complex topics, and developing collective projects to solidify material comprehension.
- b) Project collaboration: through tools like Trello or Asana, students engage in joint projects, assign tasks, plan work phases, and share outcomes, contributing to project management and teamwork skill development.
- c) Forums and discussion groups: participation in discussions on specialized forums or social media groups focused on academic subjects enables students to pose questions, exchange ideas, and seek solutions, encouraging deep engagement with study materials.
- d) Peer assessment: platforms supporting peer review, like Peergrade, facilitate mutual evaluations of assignments and projects, fostering critical thinking and peer feedback.
- e) Mentoring and Tutoring: more experienced students or alums guide newer learners, assisting various online platforms or social networking sites, enriching the educational journey and encouraging professional advancement.
- f) Interactive Learning Tools and Games: engaging educational activities and games designed for group interaction, like Kahoot! or Quizlet, add fun to learning, thereby deepening understanding of the subject matter interactively.

Psychological aspects of interaction in virtual communities

Participation in digital communities significantly affects its members' mental health and social integration, offering new perspectives on how social connections and emotional interactions evolve within the digital age. These impacts span several psychological aspects, including feelings of belonging, the capacity for self-expression, experiences of social support, and methods for online identity management, each uniquely enriching the online experience for individuals [12, 15–17].

Sense of community. Digital platforms cater to the basic human need for connection, enabling users to build significant relationships with others with similar interests and experiences. It is especially crucial for individuals facing difficulties with social integration or with limited opportunities for in-person interactions, providing a virtual space to find belonging and community.

Self-expression. The online world creates a space where individuals can freely share their thoughts, feelings, and creativity without fear of judgment. When their contributions are acknowledged and supported by the community, this enhances self-esteem and confidence. Additionally, online anonymity and the absence of direct interaction can lead to deeper conversations about sensitive subjects, promoting a greater understanding of oneself and empathy towards others.

Supportive networks. The perception of social support within online communities is critical in promoting psychological well-being. Emotional support, advice, and the simple act of being heard can significantly lessen feelings of loneliness and isolation, strengthening one's sense of community and emotional resilience.

Managing impressions online. Strategically presenting oneself in online spaces entails a deliberate curation of shared content, communication styles, and interests. This control over one's digital

persona can relieve social pressures, yet it might also bring about stress and apprehension regarding the sustainability of that constructed image or the fear of its compromise.

The interplay of these psychological elements within online communities fosters a multifaceted web of social relationships, enabling participants to navigate various aspects of their identities, refine social competencies, and seek emotional support. However, it also imposes certain demands on mindfulness and responsibility in communication, highlighting the importance of balancing online and offline interactions to maintain psychological health. This balanced approach ensures that virtual communities remain enriching, supportive environments that contribute positively to individual growth and well-being.

Methods and forms of student activity in online communities

In online communities, students find various ways to actively participate and interact, transcending traditional academic boundaries and unlocking new opportunities for learning and development. They not only exchange knowledge and resources but also create their content, participate in group projects, initiate discussions, and even develop educational materials, making a substantial contribution to the educational process [18]. Participation in forums and discussions allows students to share their thoughts and ideas, pose questions, find answers, and critically analyse different viewpoints. These platforms become spaces for deep reflection and experience exchange, where everyone can express themselves and receive feedback, thereby fostering the development of critical thinking and the ability to defend their position logically [19]. They create and publish content, whether blogs, podcasts, videos, or informational graphics, providing students with a platform for self-expression and self-realisation. It not only aids in consolidating knowledge through creative application but also allows students to develop skills crucial in both academic and professional spheres, from clearly articulating their thoughts to competencies in digital technologies. Participating in group projects and collaborative initiatives through online platforms stimulates the development of team skills and the ability to work in a collaborative environment. Students learn to plan project work, distribute tasks, interact and coordinate their actions, providing invaluable experience for future professional activities [20]. Initiating and engaging in discussions is essential in students' activity in online communities. By initiating discussions, proposing subjects for exploration, or sharing their viewpoints on contemporary matters, students play a pivotal role in cultivating a vibrant and insightful dialogue. This enriches the educational journey and promotes analytical thinking across a variety of topics. Creating educational content and tools is another avenue through which students can enhance their grasp of subjects and disseminate their insights to peers. Producing instructional videos, infographics, brief summaries, or interactive quizzes enriches the learning ecosystem, supporting individual and communal educational advancements [21].

These activities augment students' academic experiences and encourage the cultivation of key competencies such as self-direction, proactivity, collaboration, and the adept use of digital tools to fulfil objectives. Through these means, students become active contributors to the educational narrative, rendering it more engaging, responsive, and attuned to the demands of modern-day society.

Influence of engaging in discussions and projects on learning outcomes

Engaging in online forums and group initiatives profoundly enhances the learning experience, providing a stage for thorough contemplation and practical application of acquired knowledge. Such interactions include participation in student forums and digital groups focused on topical discussions and collaborative problem-solving [22]. These platforms enable students to delve into and apply information within real-world contexts, thus deepening their material comprehension. Collaborative endeavours, such as those facilitated by GitHub or Google Docs, rally students around joint academic or software development projects. In these settings, students allocate roles [23], debate strategies, and exchange expertise, fostering team collaboration skills and enhancing accountability

for collective outcomes. Discussion boards within educational platforms like Moodle or Coursera allow students to delve into intricate course-related subjects [24]. This mode of interaction promotes enhanced material retention and hones students' critical thinking and debate abilities. Peer evaluations, as facilitated on platforms like Peergrade, allow students to assess one another's submissions, providing a means to obtain constructive criticism and perceive their efforts from diverse perspectives [25]. This mechanism elevates academic prowess and refines skills in critically appraising work, be it one's own or that of peers.

Therefore, active participation in online dialogues and collaborative projects affords students invaluable opportunities for experiential learning and acquiring competencies vital in today's landscape. It aids in academic achievement enhancement and prepares students for professional scenarios that demand adaptability, teamwork, and analytical thinking.

Practical approaches to fostering student engagement

In today's educational paradigm, fostering active student engagement is paramount for effective learning, and various strategies are employed. Interactive pedagogies, such as group debates, case analyses, and simulation exercises, engage students directly in the educational process, encouraging them to apply theoretical knowledge to practical scenarios, analyze real-life challenges, and devise their own strategies for resolution. Project-based instruction emerges as a formidable strategy for engagement. It urges students to undertake extensive projects tied to real-world issues and tasks. This methodology drives students to seek creative solutions and fosters collaboration, thereby nurturing critical thinking, team dynamics, and problem-solving capabilities. The introduction of digital resources has significantly transformed how students engage with their studies. Platforms such as educational websites, apps, learning through gaming, discussion forums, and blogs have made learning an interactive and vibrant experience. Utilising social media to form educational groups or channels further enhances the bond between students and educators, fostering a rich knowledge exchange and collaborative study environment.

Incorporating gamification elements into education by integrating game mechanics into the learning process markedly boosts student engagement. Introducing rewards, points, levels, and competitive elements can turn learning into an exciting adventure, motivating students to excel. This method transforms learning from a routine task into an intriguing experience, keeping students interested. Providing feedback is essential for engaging students effectively. Regular, constructive feedback allows students to recognise their strengths and areas needing improvement, spurring ongoing progress. Supportive encouragement from educators significantly uplifts students' confidence in their capabilities and enthusiasm for learning. Involving students in research projects and scientific conferences is a powerful motivator for active involvement. Participating in research applies theoretical knowledge practically, enhancing critical thinking, data analysis, and synthesis skills. Establishing study groups and support networks among students creates a supportive learning atmosphere, where collaboration on academic tasks and knowledge sharing bolsters academic success and mastery of the curriculum [26].

Further discussions on student engagement highlight the significance of virtual study groups. Platforms like Telegram or Slack enable students to share ideas, pose questions, and collaborate on real-time assignments. These tools offer advanced features for group organisation, such as creating separate channels for different subjects or projects, streamlining communication, and enhancing group work coordination [27].

Cloud-based services for document collaboration, like Google Docs and Microsoft Teams, permit synchronous contributions and edits, facilitating smooth cooperation on complex projects. These platforms enhance student interaction and promote teamwork and critical thinking. Proactively using educational websites and apps, such as Moodle and Canvas, introduces further avenues for student engagement. Educators can design interactive modules, quizzes, and forums to discuss aca-

demic subjects, urging students to participate in the learning process actively [28]. These platforms also enable progress monitoring and personalised feedback, vital for sustaining motivation and ensuring successful learning outcomes. Adopting gamification techniques through platforms like Kahoot! and Socrative transforms education into an enjoyable experience. Students engage in friendly competition, answering questions and solving puzzles, which aids in better retention of information and adds a fun element to education, boosting interest and participation. Regular sessions on video conferencing apps like Zoom or Google Meet for live lectures and seminars where students can interact and ask questions in real time significantly enhance engagement [29]. This approach promotes closer student-teacher interaction and a more tailored educational experience.

Additionally, hosting webinars and online lectures with guest experts from various fields extends the educational horizon, offering students access to current knowledge and direct insights. This strategy enriches the educational journey and guides students toward their professional paths.

Research and analysis on the role of online community involvement in academic achievement

Exploring the impact of student participation in online communities on their academic performance reveals a clear positive correlation between active engagement in digital forums and enhanced learning outcomes. The digital age reshapes education, providing students and teachers with powerful tools for interaction and learning expansion [30]. For example, a study across multiple universities showed that students actively involved in online academic forums and collaborative platforms significantly improved their grades, with a discernible GPA advantage over less active peers. This effect is attributed to the vibrant exchange of ideas and support available online, enriching the educational experience and deepening comprehension of the material [31]. Moreover, the vast online resource pool allows students to delve deeper into topics. Platforms like Coursera and Khan Academy offer supplementary courses, enabling students to customise their learning to their interests and needs, thus enhancing performance [32] and motivation. Participation in online project collaborations, such as those on GitHub or Slack, enhances students' practical skills and teamwork abilities. Engaging in interdisciplinary projects introduces students to diverse approaches and perspectives [33], enriching their problem-solving skills and adaptability in real-world applications. Furthermore, virtual communities provide an excellent platform for honing communication skills for success in disciplines requiring analytical discussions and presentations. Participating in online debates and peer reviews sharpens students' argumentation skills and ability to provide constructive feedback [34, 35], leading to improved performance in assignments and exams.

Statistical evidence underscores this trend, with active participants in online communities generally achieving higher academic success. This observation underscores the value of incorporating interactive online platforms into the educational framework to encourage a more engaged and collaborative learning environment.

Academic performance: distinguishing active from passive participants

The degree of student involvement in their educational path, especially in online discussions, significantly impacts their academic success. Comparing active participants with their less engaged peers highlights notable differences in how they approach their studies, their motivation levels, and the outcomes they achieve [36]. Active participants are deeply immersed in their learning, engaging eagerly in discussions, projects, and group activities. They seek beyond the basic requirements, aiming to expand their knowledge and share insights with others [37]. Such engagement leads to a comprehensive understanding of the material and fosters the development of critical thinking, analytical skills, and the ability to work collaboratively.

On the other hand, passive learners show limited engagement [38], often attending classes without actively contributing to discussions or group work. This lack of involvement can result in a

basic grasp of the subject matter and insufficient depth of knowledge [39]. Passive engagement negatively influences academic achievements and is typically associated with low motivation and minimal interaction with instructors and peers.

Studies demonstrate that active involvement, primarily through digital forums, is positively associated with better academic performance [40]. This advantage is linked to increased motivation, a richer grasp of educational content, and acquiring essential skills for future success. Conversely, a passive approach correlates with lower academic results, emphasising the importance of fostering active participation in the educational process [41]. Thus, creating a supportive and engaging learning environment that encourages every student to take the initiative and actively engage in discussions and collaborative projects is crucial for practical education and skill development.

Role of motivation and self-organization in academic success

The foundation of academic success is significantly influenced by motivation and self-organisation, essential elements that underpin students' educational pursuits and skill development. Investigating the impact of these factors on performance offers more profound insights into learning dynamics and potential improvements – internal or external motivation is a vital driver of student engagement and persistence. Internally motivated students, driven by genuine interest and the pursuit of self-enhancement, tend to experience a more sustained and impactful learning journey. These students typically show extraordinary dedication to their studies and successfully navigate challenges [42]. Self-organisation is equally critical, enabling students to manage their time and resources effectively. Well-organised students can prioritise their studies, adhere to schedules, and achieve academic goals more efficiently [43]. Motivation and self-organisation lead to enhanced academic outcomes [44]. Motivated and well-organised students focus more on their educational objectives, optimally using their time and resources to fulfil their ambitions. They also adapt more readily to challenges, maintaining a solid commitment to their studies. Thus, educational institutions are pivotal in creating environments that nurture motivation and bolster self-management skills [45]. Strategies might include offering independent learning resources, conducting workshops on effective study techniques and time management, and implementing a motivational assessment system that acknowledges and rewards students' hard work and progress [46]. Consequently, motivation and self-organisation are interrelated factors that collectively influence students' performance. Developing these qualities promotes academic success and lays the groundwork for personal growth and professional development, preparing students for a successful career and life in society.

Challenges and obstacles to participating in virtual communities

While engaging in online communities presents vast learning and networking opportunities, it also introduces specific challenges and obstacles that users must navigate. Technical prowess and access to adequate resources are essential to surmount psychological and social hurdles in virtual settings [47]. A significant barrier for many is technological access. Not every student has the luxury of high-speed internet or advanced gadgets, restricting their full involvement in online communities, especially for those in remote or less affluent regions [48]. Additionally, a shortfall in digital literacy can pose a considerable hindrance. Navigating virtual platforms demands skills in information retrieval, evaluating credibility, and maintaining online safety. A lack of these competencies can compromise the effectiveness of learning and interactions within these digital spaces. Psychological factors further complicate virtual engagement [49]. The absence of physical interaction and direct communication can foster feelings of isolation, potentially diminishing motivation and academic engagement.

Moreover, the anonymity afforded by online platforms can, unfortunately, enable hostile behaviours and cyberbullying, detracting from a positive educational experience [2]. While enriching, the diversity of socio-cultural backgrounds in virtual communities can lead to misunderstandings and

conflicts. Students are thus challenged to hone their abilities in navigating intercultural communications and fostering tolerance [50].

Information overload presents another significant issue [51]. The sheer volume of available data can overwhelm students, making it difficult to concentrate on relevant study materials and effectively absorb information. Moreover, instructors' lack of structured educational frameworks and direct oversight in online learning scenarios challenges students' time management and self-organization skills [52], potentially impacting their academic achievements.

Acknowledging these hurdles is crucial as virtual communities continue to expand educational boundaries. Addressing these challenges necessitates collaborative efforts from educational entities, instructors, and students to cultivate a supportive and equitable learning environment.

Maintaining academic integrity in an online environment

Upholding academic integrity within a digital learning context presents intricate challenges; shifting away from the traditional classroom setup to a remote learning model complicates the oversight of assignments and the administration of examinations, opening avenues for academic dishonesty. A prominent concern is the verification of student identities in a digital landscape, where confirming the identity of the individual completing an assignment becomes a formidable task [53]. The ease of accessing external assistance or utilizing work from others without detection undermines the principles of academic honesty. The vast online repository of information, including ready-made essays, facilitates plagiarism and copying [54], necessitating robust plagiarism detection tools and methods to differentiate between students' original efforts and replicated work. Another issue arises with the execution of online assessments. Ensuring their transparency and fairness requires educational institutions to apply specialized software for monitoring and control, leading to additional financial and technical expenses [55]. Moreover, privacy and data protection issues for students make the task even more complex. Tackling academic integrity issues in digital learning environments requires a multifaceted strategy. The key to this approach is cultivating a culture of truthfulness and accountability among the student body, which is underscored by educational initiatives that highlight the significance of academic ethics and the repercussions of misconduct [56]. This effort is supported by establishing explicit guidelines and protocols for completing and assessing assignments, alongside administering exams in virtual settings.

Implementing technological aids, such as plagiarism detection tools, exam monitoring via video, and identity confirmation software, is vital for upholding academic honesty [57]. Nonetheless, it is critical to acknowledge that technological measures alone are insufficient and should be paired with educational and disciplinary actions [58]. Ensuring academic integrity within online learning environments necessitates collaborative input from educational institutions, instructors, and students. The goal is to foster a transparent, equitable, and ethical educational atmosphere, thereby safeguarding the quality and reputation of the education delivered.

Insights from research on the role of online communities in student learning outcomes

Explorations into the effects of online communities on student achievements are paving the way for a deeper comprehension of educational dynamics in the digital realm. Many students use online platforms to facilitate communication, knowledge exchange, and collaborative project work. The influence of such virtual environments on academic success is a subject of keen interest among educators and researchers [59]. Findings indicate that involvement in online communities positively correlates with improved learning outcomes and student performance. These digital forums offer unparalleled opportunities for collective learning, exchanging ideas, and access to diverse informational resources [60]. Students actively involved in online interactions and collaborative efforts tend to exhibit greater engagement with their studies and a more thorough understanding of the course material. However, studies also point to various issues and challenges when leveraging online

communities for educational objectives. Issues of academic integrity, maintaining motivation and self-organisation among students in an online environment require additional attention from educational institutions. Ensuring equal access to all necessary resources and tools for all students is also crucial to prevent potential inequality and informational isolation [61]. Moreover, research results underscore the importance of developing effective teaching strategies and methods adapted to the peculiarities of virtual communities [62]. Teachers need to pay special attention to creating an inclusive and stimulating online educational environment that fosters active interaction and collaboration among students.

Research on the impact of virtual communities on student performance opens new perspectives for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of education. Active use of online platforms and technologies can contribute to creating more flexible, accessible, and personalised educational programs that meet the needs of modern students and society as a whole.

Prospects for the development of virtual communities in education

The prospects for the development of virtual communities in education promise a radical transformation of learning. Considering technological progress and the growing focus on remote learning, virtual educational platforms are becoming not just an alternative to traditional teaching methods, but a powerful tool capable of providing deeper immersion in study material and increasing the accessibility and inclusivity of education. Among the key trends shaping the future of virtual communities in education is the integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning. These technologies can facilitate personalised learning, analyse students' needs and preferences, and provide individual recommendations for courses and materials. Automation of learning and assessment will allow educators to focus on developing quality content and interacting with students [63]. The expansion of virtual laboratories and simulators will open new opportunities for practical training in various disciplines. Students will have the opportunity to engage in experiments and research within a digital setting, which is particularly crucial for the distance learning of disciplines such as natural sciences, medicine, engineering, and others that demand hands-on skills. Fostering connections between educational bodies and online communities will facilitate the establishment of global educational initiatives, uniting students and educators from across the globe. This collaboration not only facilitates the sharing of knowledge and experiences, but also nurtures intercultural skills among learners. There is also a focused effort on enhancing the social dynamics within online communities. Establishing an environment that supports effective communication, teamwork, and mutual assistance among learners will address the feeling of isolation frequently encountered in distance education. The introduction of mentoring schemes and support networks is instrumental in cultivating a robust educational community, where support and assistance are readily available to every participant. Achieving these goals necessitates more than just technological advancements; it also calls for the creation of innovative pedagogical strategies tailored to the unique aspects of online engagement. Elevating digital literacy amongst both educators and learners, upholding ethical norms, and safeguarding privacy online are crucial components. In essence, online educational communities hold vast potential to broaden educational access and empower student self-development. Their continued growth and integration into formal education will play a pivotal role in delivering a more adaptable, accessible, and interactive learning experience, aligning with the evolving demands of today's society and the job market.

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Information about the authors

Semen M. Levin, Cand. Sc., PhD, Professor, Tomsk State University of Control Systems and Radioelectronics, 40, Lenin avenue, Tomsk, 634050, Russian Federation. semen.m.levin@tusur.ru; <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3470-6365>

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Информация об авторах

Семен Михайлович Левин, кандидат юридических наук, PhD, профессор кафедры автоматизированных систем управления Томского государственного университета систем управления и радиоэлектроники, Россия, 634050, г. Томск, пр. Ленина, 40. semen.m.levin@tusur.ru; <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3470-6365>

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